(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the total number of fighter aircrafts in operation in the country at present?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Government concluded a Contract during 1996 with Rosvoorouzhenie, a Russian enterprise, for the procurement of 8 Sukhoi-30 K and 32 Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft. These aircrafts are being delivered in batches. 12 Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft have been received during October-December, 2003.

(c) It would not be in the interest of national security to disclose the information.

Purchase of AK 47 Assault Rifles

312. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have recently purchased A.K. 47 Assault rifles from a Bulgarian firm by overlooking the tender offer which was 25 per cent cheaper.

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what are the specific reasons for ignoring the cheapest offer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL):(a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Joint Patrolling in the High Seas with foreign Countries

313. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has proposed joint patrolling of high seas with Singapore, Australia, Thailand and Philippines to check piracy, narco trafficking, smuggling etc.;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how India stands to gain by this move?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE):(a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Procurement of light weight sturdy helmets for Indian army

314. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Army propose to procure light weight and sturdier helmets for its Jawans to reduce the casualties in counter-insurgencyjoperations in Kashmir and North-East; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) No, proposal has been received by the Ministry of Defence from the Army Headquarters to procure light weight helmets.

Decrease in the number of persons joining defence forces

315. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that less and lesser number of people are applying to join the defence forces;

(b) if so, what is the percentage of decrease in applications in the last five years; and

(c) whether Government have made special drives to recruit people from areas and from amongst groups and communities where people have not traditionally been joining the army for various reasons?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No,.Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Every eligible citizen of the country irrespective of caste, class, religion, community and domicile is eligible for recruitment into the armed forces, provided he or she meets the laid down age, educational, physical, medical standards and other criteria.